Media release

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From motel to premium lodge, Banubanu's next move in East Arnhem

A new wave of private investment is reshaping East Arnhem's tourism landscape with Banubanu Beach Retreat owners Fulvio Inserra and Eileen O'Doherty announcing their purchase of the Gove Motel, their second major acquisition in the region within 12 months.

The Gove Motel will be rebranded as the Banubanu Lodge with significant upgrades planned to deliver a premium experience for travellers and create a central base for exploration of East Arnhem's pristine landscapes, rich Indigenous culture and remote island destinations.

The purchase follows the owners' acquisition of the acclaimed Banubanu Beach Retreat in early 2025 after relocating from Melbourne to call East Arnhem home. Banubanu Beach Retreat and Banubanu Lodge Co-Owner Fulvio Inserra said this is a deliberate strategy to create a seamless, end-to-end visitor experience across the region.

"This investment is about solving a real challenge for visitors and lifting the overall experience of East Arnhem," Fulvio said.

"We want guests to arrive in Gove knowing they're looked after from the moment they land. Banubanu Lodge will give people a premium base to explore the region, connect with culture and travel on to the Banubanu Beach Retreat without stress or compromise."

The former Gove Motel currently includes 19 fully contained rooms with shared facilities including BBQ and inground pool. Planned renovations will deliver a premium lodge experience, with upgraded rooms, the construction of up to 20 premium self-contained units for professional short stay workers with weekly servicing, enhanced shared spaces, free airport transfers, nightly shuttle services and landscaping to showcase the natural beauty of the area.

Banubanu Lodge will serve as a practical solution for guests travelling to the Banubanu Beach Retreat impacted by flight or ferry scheduling constraints. Banubanu Beach Retreat and Banubanu Lodge Co-Owner Eileen O'Doherty said they aim for the Banubanu Lodge to be a base for tourists and corporate visitors alike exploring Gove and the wider East Arnhem region.

"We want Banubanu Lodge to be more than just a stopover," Eileen said.

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"We're creating a home base for travellers and locals alike. A place that celebrates the culture, landscape and community of East Arnhem while supporting quality jobs and strong visitor experiences."

The site will also be activated as a community hub, with long-term plans for food trucks, live music, events and landscaped open spaces, creating a new meeting point for all to enjoy.

Chief Executive Officer Developing East Arnhem Limited (DEAL), Luke Walker said he welcomed the acquisition as a positive sign of growing confidence in East Arnhem and securing a sustainable future for the region.

"When established operators choose to expand here, it reinforces the growing confidence in East Arnhem Land as a destination with unmatched cultural and natural assets," Mr Walker said.

"Through strong partnerships and strategic support, DEAL is committed to working with Traditional Owners, investors and industry to build a sustainable and secure future for the region, unlocking opportunities that benefit local communities and the broader Northern Territory economy."

CommBank Executive Manager, Regional and Agribuiness Banking, Marlon Saunders said he welcomed the investment as a positive step as the region develops infrastructure to support growth in tourism.

"CommBank is proud to support Banubanu's investment in the new Banubanu Lodge. The tourism sector will play an important role in the long-term prosperity of the region and we're committed to supporting customers in growing the local economy, creating opportunities and providing incredible experiences to visitors."

The investment adds fresh momentum to East Arnhem's tourism story, reinforcing the region's appeal as a place to visit, invest and build for the future.

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